

Los Interiors

COOL LODGING

THE WINTER ISSUE

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Let There Be Light

A spacious spread on a double lot in Ravenswood strikes a sun-soaked balance between city- and suburban-style living.

By Amalie Drury | Photography by Caleb Condit



For a decade, the Baer family lived in a 100-year-old Victorian house in Ravenswood. It was charming, but there were no windows in the back, and everywhere you looked, the theme was dark and darker. It was depressing in winter. “We coveted our neighbors’ property,” says Joy Baer, a software executive and mother of two grade-school-age children. Joy and her husband Steve, a real estate agent and entrepreneur, would cruise the surrounding streets eyeing houses under construction, looking for one that might suit their sunlight-deprived family and taking mental notes about which builders kept the cleanest worksites. The Baers didn’t hesitate when a “for sale” sign sprang up one day on a double lot just around the corner. “We got on the phone and said to each other, ‘Let’s buy it,’” Joy remembers.

The home is an expanse of open, window-lined rooms centered around a courtyard.

Four years later, the Baers are living in a nearly constant wash of natural light. Their new house is a comfortable Craftsman-style design by architect Charles Cook with clean, neutral interiors by Sarah Van Assche. (Reid Johnson of Edison Builders—the general contractor the Baers chose based on his spotless job sites, and who was an important member of the team—has left the business since the project was completed.) The home is a connective expanse of open, window-lined rooms situated around an element inspired by Steve’s childhood in Florida: a central outdoor courtyard visible from all indoor common areas. **CONTINUED...**

FUN OVER FORMALITY

Clockwise from left: In the great room, interior designer Sarah Van Assche chose a mohair-upholstered Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams Jordan sectional, a Pakistani Zeigler carpet and a polished nickel floor lamp from Arteriors Home; a Brunswick Treviso contemporary pool table fills the billiards room; a view into the courtyard



SIDE THE LINES
 clockwise from
 The curvilinear
 staircase was
 inspired by the
 work of classicist
 architect Robert A.M.
 O'Connell, handmade in
 on-site Illinois
 assembled and
 finished on-site, white
 hand-scraped wide
 plank floors are by
 two; in the entry
 and powder room,
 hand-scraped Jerusalem
 field stone with
 leopard-themed mosaic tile
 is customized by the
 designer and imported
 from Italy; Van Assche
 chose Benjamin
 Moore's Navajo White
 in latex paint for
 custom kitchen
 cabinets designed
 by SVAI. The leopard
 theme countertops are
 complemented by a
 custom Sticks glass
 mosaic backsplash
 from Artistic Tile.



...CONTINUED Cook calls the courtyard the “guiding organizational feature” of the entire house. “It’s an inverted glass box anchored by the vertical stone wall of the fireplace, and it provides a visual focal point from every room,” he says.

The width of the Baer’s lot was key to the success of the home’s design. Not only was there an opportunity to make the courtyard large enough to serve as a usable venue for outdoor entertaining, but the light-catching space doesn’t constrain the size of the surrounding rooms. “We came to Charles Cook with five different ideas of how we thought the courtyard could be shaped,” says Steve. “He was incredible at taking what we thought we wanted and turning it into a workable reality.”

Elsewhere in the home, modern family life drove design decisions. Van Assche chose the finishes and furniture based on style and durability—like the dark, textured floor made from a damage-resistant engineered wood product and the sturdy living room sectional couch by Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. Joy travels frequently for work, so the flow of the master suite—from bedroom to closet to an exit through the master bath—was designed to allow her to pack and slip out for an early flight without waking her husband.



A staircase leading to the basement home theater ends in an elongated, raised landing that serves as a stage where the children perform skits and news programs. A second-floor sundeck is accessible from both the master and the hallway outside the kids’ rooms. (Tomatoes grown on the deck last summer thrived in the shadeless heat and absence of ground-level pests.) A first-floor room at the front of the

home that another family might furnish for formal entertaining contains a contemporary, beige-topped Brunswick pool table.

Technological wonders abound—a “goodbye button” flips off lights, adjusts the thermostat and activates the security system in one fell swoop, and Steve says the radiant heat on all three floors is his favorite aspect of the house. And whether the Baers are hosting 100 guests for a barbecue fundraiser for their children’s school (the party included an 18-foot blowup slide in the backyard) or putting up 16 family members from Texas and Florida over the holidays, there’s space for everyone.

In another life, Joy and Steve used to take mini breaks from their old house, checking into downtown hotels just to soak up the light and luxuries—but they say their wanderlust has abated since they moved in. “Now there’s no hotel bathtub that’s nicer than ours,” says Steve. And when there’s this much sunlight streaming in, who needs to go out looking for it? ■